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# Human Rights Education in Pre-Service Teacher Education – Pakistan

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## Abstract

As per international obligations, Human Rights Education (HRE) should be imparted to all. In Pakistan, teacher training institutes and Bachelors in Education (BEd) programs provide a platform for promoting and ensuring the teaching of human rights to prospective teachers. Hence, the purpose of this study was to assess the extent of the transfer of knowledge about human rights to pre-service teachers during their BEd courses. A case study approach was used in qualitative paradigm to study the BEd programs of three education universities in Lahore, Pakistan. The study used document analysis and survey with pre-service teachers for the collection of data. Content analysis was used to analyze the scheme of studies given by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan and the subsequent curricula used by the universities under study. A survey was conducted with 150 pre-service teachers in order to determine their overall knowledge, attitudes and practices as prospective teachers towards the teaching of human rights. The results revealed that an overall positive attitude towards teaching and learning of HRE was found among the respondents of the study. However, no specific module, course or topics in a course focused on HRE in the curricula. The study reflects the need of integration of HRE in teacher training curriculum and recommends that HRE should be a mandatory part of teacher education curricula.

**Keywords:** case study, human rights education, prospective teachers, teacher education curriculum

## Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is a global representation of the continuous efforts across history to safeguard human welfare. It was drafted keeping in view various social, legal and cultural

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backgrounds from nearly all regions of the world after World War II for the sake of keeping peace. It was for the first time in history that fundamental human rights were to be protected universally, via international commitment and law (Alston & Goodman, [2013](#)). It was based on the ideology that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the states pledged to provide social, economic, political, cultural and civil rights for all. These rights were unanimously agreed upon, reflecting the universality of the document along with the will to promote justice, freedom and peace in the world (UNO, [1948](#)).

Human rights comprise both rights and obligations. While every human being is entitled to fundamental human rights, the state is obliged to respect, protect and fulfill these rights (Glendon, [2001](#); Osler, Rathenow & Starkey, [2015](#); Zembylas, [2017a](#); Zembylas, [2017b](#)). By signing and ratifying a human rights’ instrument such as UDHR, the state automatically becomes accountable to all citizens, under international law. The state needs to a) respect these rights by doing nothing which deprives the people of their rights and ought to put adequate legislation in place to protect these rights b) prevent the violations of rights and/or stop the third party violation and c) fulfill these rights by taking deliberate actions which ensure their realization (OHCHR). Pakistan is also a signatory of the Charter of Human Rights. For a more in-depth understanding of these rights, United Nations formed treaty bodies which looked at the application and implementation of these rights in a more systematic and accountable way.

Human rights have not originated from any one society, culture or region. They have evolved under multiple influences from various religious, philosophical and socio-political movements over time (Donnelly, [2013](#)). However, the instrument for human rights was provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in Paris on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1948. Human rights comprise a set of norms and moral principles which represent specific behaviors or attitudes that are protected by national and international law (Merrigan, [2014](#)). These are rights inherent to all without discrimination regardless of nation, race, religion or geographic origin (Nickel, [2010](#)). These rights are universal and inalienable; applicable to all. They are interrelated, indivisible and interdependent, based on the principles of equality, respect, participation and dignity (Anees, [2014](#); Osler & Starkey, [2017](#)).

## 2. Human Rights Education (HRE)

Human Rights Education (HRE) is an international movement to advance awareness about the rights declared by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other related human rights conventions and the methodology that exists for preventing the violations of these rights (Tarrow, [2014](#) & Fernekas, [2011](#)). The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights defined HRE as the “training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through imparting of knowledge and skills and the molding of attitudes directed to: (a) the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; (b) the full development of human personality and the sense of its dignity; (c) the promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups; and (d) the enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society (Quinn et al., [2014](#)).

Mihr ([2009](#)) declared 1990s as the era of human rights awareness, democratic transformation, and an increasing concern of international organizations and non-governmental sectors about HRE. HRE is based on the concept of making the rights’ holders realize their own rights and the rights of others (Osler & Starkey, [2017](#)), since the full realization of these rights for all would not be possible without establishing a common understanding of what is to be ‘taught’, how it is to be taught and by whom. Struthers ([2015](#)) argued that the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training provides the necessary framework of key components necessary for the provision of holistic HRE—education about, through and for human rights.

Anwer ([2010](#)) also lamented that the violation of human rights is the common fate of every Pakistani. Although living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, being a nuclear armed state proclaimed to be walking on the path of the realization of the vision of an Islamic welfare state, hundreds of thousands of people are still deprived of their fundamental rights of food, shelter and belongingness. Gul ([2018](#)) further highlighted the dismal situation of human rights in Pakistan while discussing the 2018 report by Human Rights Watch. She related that throughout the year, women, religious minorities, children and transgender faced violent attacks and discrimination in Pakistan. Many international organizations repeatedly point out restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of movement, child and women abuse and

harassment. People easily become the target of hate speech and character assassination.

In 1947, All Pakistan Education Conference chaired by Mr. Fazl-ur-Rehman, three dimensions were set for the country's education system, that is, social, spiritual and vocational; sadly, the current education system has been restricted to only one dimension, that is, vocational. Ignorance is a constant threat to human rights that breeds discrimination, intolerance and radicalization in societies. Developed states like Australia have declared that 'Education protects human rights much more effectively than any punitive or legal regime'. Even India started a post graduate degree program and several diplomas in Punjab University, Chandigarh in 2006/07. Unfortunately, in Pakistan we do not see any such development.

Osler and Starkey (2017) described teaching as a difficult profession in which teacher educators face numerous challenges in teacher preparation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. HRE is one such area which has not only direct implications on the life and wellbeing of students and teachers but the whole society (Anees, 2014; Bajaj, 2012). Rieckmann (2012) argued that universities play an important role in shaping the future of the world society through sustainable development by generating new knowledge as well as contributing to the development of appropriate competencies and raising awareness about sustainability. This research intends to deal with an intriguing problem related to the key competencies to be developed in students, especially prospective teachers. Some of the key competencies identified for the purpose are systemic thinking, anticipatory thinking and critical thinking. Such higher order thinking skills are vital to deal with issues and problems the future holds for us (Adomßent, Barth, Fischer, Richter, & Rieckmann, 2014).

Previous studies (Sadrudin & Rehman, 2013; Sadrudin & Douglass, 2018; Rehmani, 2006) have indicated that the teacher pre-service training programs need to broaden the vision of teachers via addressing the reluctant attitude of teachers towards professional development along with equipping them with skills to handle larger classrooms and other issues faced in the field. The curriculum taught to pre-service teachers in these programs is revised by HEC after a few years. HEC also provides a teacher resource guide which helps in developing a better understanding for teacher trainers and provides adequate training materials.

Human rights and its instruments provide guidelines to the core values,

principles and articles that need to be a part of our personalities and society. They need to be known to human beings at all levels so that these rights are fully enjoyed and fulfilled (Ratner, [2013](#)). Teachers are a source of knowledge and they may ingrain these values and principles in a child to ensure that his/her rights and the rights of other individuals are respected, protected and ensured (Bajaj, [2012](#)).

Teacher training institutes and pre-service teacher education curricula form the platform for the integration of these international obligations in mainstream education. For teachers to ingrain the main concepts of human rights and HRE in students, it is important for them to be aware and trained about human rights (Tondeur et al., [2012](#)). Basic principles as well as knowledge about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments should suffice to guide them to transfer this knowledge to students of different ages.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

To understand the extent of knowledge which may be potentially passed on to students, it is important to gauge knowledge prevalent among the teachers themselves and/or the human rights related information that has been passed on to them during the course of their own education and training. This study assesses how far the current teacher training system prepares the teacher with regard to HRE. Hence, the study has the following objectives:-

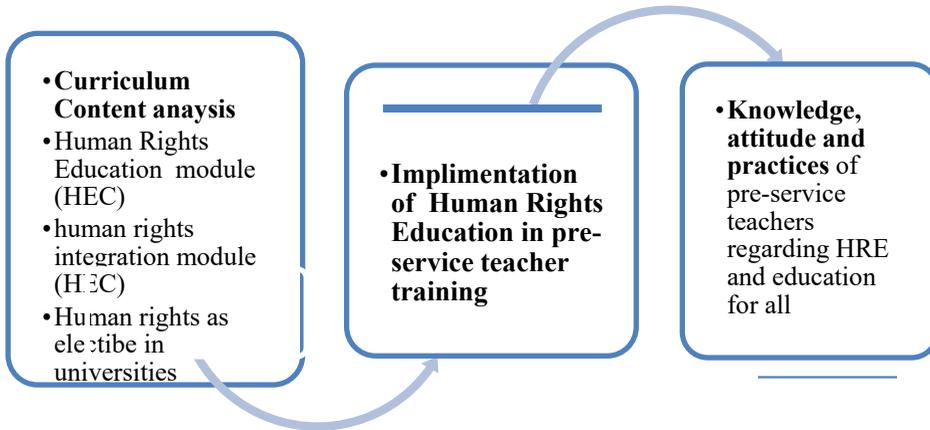
- To analyze the integration of human rights in Pakistan's pre-service teacher education curriculum.
- To assess the knowledge, attitude and practices of the students of pre-service teacher education in Pakistan in order to promote education for and in education.

### **4. Research Methodology**

The current study utilized the *case* study approach in qualitative paradigm to study the cases of three education universities in Lahore, Pakistan offering BEd. The study used survey as an instrument with pre-service teachers for the collection of data and also relied on document analysis in which HEC documents, course outlines and checklist/criterion were included. Content analysis was used to analyze *the* scheme of studies given by the HEC and the curricula used by the universities under study. Consequently, a survey was conducted with 150 pre-service teachers in

order to determine their overall knowledge, attitudes and practices towards the teaching of human rights. The three selected universities were coded as University 1, University 2 and University 3. University 1 is a large public sector university, whereas University 2 and 3 are large private sector universities.

### Conceptual Framework



*Figure 1. Research methodology*

To examine the course guidelines provided by the HEC, its ‘Curriculum of Education’ (2012) for B.Ed (Hons) was studied. Modules of core subjects such as that of English, Urdu, mathematics, arts and crafts, science, Pakistan studies, social studies, and computer studies along with other subjects such as classroom instruction, ICT, teaching literacy skills and general methods of teaching were not studied in detail due to their weak connection with HRE. However, the course contents of modules suggested by individual course guidelines provided by the HEC, such as, child development, classroom management, contemporary issues in education, and school, community and teacher were examined to find out if elements and principles of HRE are incorporated in them. Islamic studies / Ethics module was also examined.

A close-ended survey was conducted with the students of pre-service teacher education in order to study their knowledge, attitudes and practices towards education for and in human rights for all. Via convenient sampling, a survey was conducted with 150 students of the masters program. All

students had already completed their degree of Bachelors in Education. Simple descriptive analysis was applied to examine the responses of students.

## **5. Results**

### **5.1. Content Analysis of Existing Teacher Training Curriculum**

To examine the course content taught to pre-service teachers, the guidelines of HEC and their implementation in the scheme of studies of three teacher training institutes were analyzed.

### **5.2. HEC I uidelines for Bachelors in Education and Associate Degree in Education**

Courses offered in Bachelors of Education (Elementary and Secondary) and Associate Degree in Education (ADE) do not include any individual course labelled HRE. Most of the courses offered in BEd and ADE are the same (with differences in the number of courses and credit hours).The courses are focused on basic subjects including Islamic studies (and Ethics) and theyare taught along with other subjects such as classroom management, child development, contemporary issues in education (only for BEd) and school, community and teacher.

While examining course outlines and faculty resources for ‘Child Development’ provided by HEC ([2012](#)), it was observed that the stages of human development were studied with topics such as Gardener’s Theory of Multiple Intelligence and by providing an enabling environment for understanding diversity. Emotions and stress, bullying, conflict resolution between peers, gender differences in adolescent development and parenting may also indirectly touch the principles of equality, respect and dignity. The topics of inclusion, disabilities and disorders, and child neglect were also thoroughly discussed in the spirit of promoting education for all. However, no direct topic on human rights was incorporated in this module.

While examining the course guide for ‘Classroom Management’ provided by HEC ([2012](#)), it was observed that there was no topic focusing on human rights or HRE, directly. The course reviewed learning theories, curriculum and classroom management, schedules, routines and time management. However, the topic of creating ‘a shared values and community’ may in its scope incorporate values and principles of human rights. While teaching this topic, with some reflecting thinking and questioning, for example “what are the some values I would want my future

students to uphold and how would I promote or teach them?”, the topic of human rights may be addressed briefly.

The course guide for ‘Contemporary Issues and Trends in Education’ provided by HEC (2012) gives a professional reflection on global and local issues and perspectives necessary for teachers. The topics in this course range from a) globalization, millennium goals and education for all; b) issues of diversity; c) peace education; d) the role of schools in addressing contemporary issues (bridging the gap between school and community); e) the role of teacher; f) the role of technology; f) moral education; and g) gender equality. All these topics may indirectly relate with human rights and HRE. However, unlike the topic of peace education, HRE is not taught as a separate topic.

The course guide for ‘School, Community and Teacher’ provided by HEC (2012) review show a child, his/her teacher, his/her school and his/her community are linked and connected with each other. It talks about the interaction and connection of school with the society, culture and community along with the working context of Pakistani teachers. In this course, it is explained to the pre-service teachers how the community plays an integral part in the child’s learning process. However, there is no single topic covering HRE or revealing how the respect of human rights is important for a peaceful school/community/ society.

The course guide for ‘Introduction to Guidance and Counseling’ provided by HEC (2012) gives introduction to the concept of counseling, the role of teacher as counselor, strategies and interventions for problem-solving, guidance, counseling and programming. It does not include any specific component on HRE. The course guide for ‘Islamic Studies’ provides basic information about Islamic studies, Islamic civilization, how to improve the students’ skills to perform their prayers and how to improve their understanding of the issues related to their Islamic faith. The topics covered include texts from the Quran and Sunnah, life of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H), Islamic history, Islamic law, Islamic economic system, political system and Islam and science. There is one topic on the social systems of Islam which include the elements of family and ethical values of Islam and another on Islamic culture and civilization which discusses the basic concepts, historical development and characteristics of Islamic culture and society.

There is no specific topic in Islamic studies course, as guided by HEC, which reviews the so-called Rights of Human Beings (Haqooq-ul- Ibad), or one that looks forward to encouraging students to distinguish between right and wrong based on Islamic values in their own lives. It can be argued that the “Seerah of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H)” shows how Prophet lived in his lifetime, forming the basis of human rights and HRE. However, a more direct approach to teaching human rights by blending them with religion is needed.

### **5.3. Course Outline of Bachelors in Education at University'1**

The course outline of BEd program (elementary and secondary) follows the HEC guidelines (as mentioned above). The elective subjects include economics, history, geography, Urdu, Islamic studies, Arabic and computer science. Content (optional) course list includes philosophy, home economics, fine arts and sociology. There is no module (elective or compulsory) which incorporates HRE.

### **5.4. Course Outline of Bachelors in Education at University 2**

The course outline of BEd programs follows HEC guidelines (as mentioned above). Two BEd programs are offered at University 2. These include Bachelors in Education (with business) and Bachelors in Education (with educational management). In BEd (with business) subjects such as educational planning and management, organizational behavior, HR management, analysis and interpretation of data are included alongside other courses (as per HEC guidelines). In BEd (with educational management) subjects such as power politics in education, safety in school, educational psychology, education and society, educational policy analysis and challenges for education in developing countries are offered alongside other courses. However, there is no module which focuses on HRE and human rights issues, directly.

### **5.5. Course Outline of Bachelors of Education at University 3**

The course outline of BEd program follows HEC guidelines (as mentioned above). The BEd program offered at University 3 includes subjects with a particular emphasis on diversity and special needs education. It also includes education and mass communication, economics and sociology of education and pedagogy of love. While there is an inclination towards providing participatory rights and promoting diversity,

there is no module which incorporates HRE and human rights issues, directly.

### **5.6. Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Pre-Service Teachers**

The objective of the study was to examine the existing knowledge, attitudes and practices of prospective teachers about HRE. To achieve this target, a survey instrument was administered on a sample of 150 teachers selected from three teacher training institutes. The statements of the survey focused on three major factors regarding HRE, including the knowledge, attitudes and practices of prospective teachers. Descriptive analysis was carried out to explain the results of the responses.

It is evident from the table that 73.3% respondents were unaware of any documents related to human rights. For the respondents who said yes, a verification question was added which was answered by writing an example from the human rights document they knew. About 70% respondents left it blank, while 23% gave the wrong response; only 6% of prospective teachers gave the right response. Similarly, on the statement about the provision of content related to human rights in the curriculum, it is evident from the table that 84.7% respondents stated that the content taught to them does not incorporate HRE. In the auxiliary statement, they were asked to give an example from the content; however, 82% of them left it blank.

Regarding statement three concerned with the knowledge of human rights in their religion (Islam), only 52% respondents were aware about it and only 20.7% respondents stated examples of human rights in Islam. Regarding the statement of knowledge about any organization working for human rights, 34.7% respondents said that they knew about them. However, only 8% of them were able to write the name of such an organization in the auxiliary statement. In statement five, they were asked about the knowledge of targets achieved by the UNESCO agenda 'Education for all'. Only 34.7% were aware of them. In contrast, only 24.7% were able to give correct literacy rate of the country. They were asked about the basic parameters of human rights in statement six. 74% respondents agreed that they knew about them. However, none of them stated a response on the auxiliary statement.

The second part of the instrument was about the attitude towards HRE. Table 2 shows percentages of responses on eight statements intended to explore the attitude of prospective teachers about HRE. Regarding statement 7, approximately 72% respondents agreed that girls and boys.

Table 1  
*Percentages of respondents on Knowledge about HRE*

Sr #	Topics related to knowledge	Statement			Auxiliary Statement		
		Have knowledge (%)	Do not have any knowledge (%)	Correct Response (%)	Incorrect Response (%)	Blank (%)	
1	Documents related to human rights?	26.7	73.3	6	23.3	70.7	
2	Contents related to human rights in your program of study?	15.3	84.7	-	18	82	
3	Basic human rights in Islam.	48	52	20.7	50.7	28.7	
4	International/ national organizations working for Human Rights.	68.7	34.7	8	18.7	73.3	
5	UNESCO agenda 'Education for All'.	65.3	34.7	24.7	36.7	38.7	
6	Parameters of right to Education.	74	26	-	36	64	

Table 2

*Percentages of respondents on Attitude about HRE*

Sr #	Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Don't know (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1	Girls and boys have equal right of access to education	35.3	37.3	11.3	11.3	4.7
2	Elite schools should be accessible to every child free of cost in the country without any discrimination.	44.7	42.0	7.3	4.7	1.3
3	The system of inclusive education should be implemented in Pakistan.	46.7	42	11.3	-	-
4	Children with disability and from marginalized groups have the right to education.	38	49.3	12.7	-	-
5	There should be no barrier to the education of students with special needs and marginalized children.	31.3	47.3	7.3	9.3	4.7
6	Children have rights and these rights should be respected.	37.3	52.7	8.0	2	-
7	Human rights related activities should be organized in educational institutes.	40.0	51.3	6.0	2.7	-
8	It is important that everyone should know about human rights.	30.7	48.0	19.3	2.0	-

have an equal right to education. Similarly, 86% respondents agreed that elite schools should be open for poor classes on the basis of merit. On the other hand, 88.7% respondents supported the need for inclusive education. 78% respondents agreed that educational opportunities should be universal even for special needs and marginalized children. 91% respondents agreed that every child has the right to education and it should be respected by all individuals. While the same number of respondents also agreed about the need of HRE in educational organizations.

Table 3

*Percentages of respondents on Practices about HRE*

Sr. #	Statement	Response Yes (%)	Response No (%)
1	Have you participated in a course/ conference/ training related to HRE?	9.3	90.7
2	Have you organized any human rights related activities in your institute or class?	3.3	96.7
3	Do your friends or teachers discuss human rights issues?	35.5	64.7
4	Do you have membership of any human rights organization/ forum/ NGO?	30.0	70.0
5	Have you written an essay/ research paper related to the improvement of quality, access or equity of education?	4.0	96.0
6	Have you given a presentation in class related to quality education/ Education for All/ access to education?	20.7	79.3

Table 3 shows responses about practices in educational institutes about developing awareness of HRE. It is evident from the table that 90% respondents stated that no course/conference / training was held in their educational institutions about HRE. It is also clear from the table that 96% respondents stated that no activity regarding human rights was performed in their classes, while 64% respondents stated that sometimes they get

themselves involved in discussing human rights. 70% respondents stated that they have never been a part of any organization working on human rights, while 96% respondents have never written any piece of paper on HRE. Moreover, 79.3% respondents also stated that they were never given any presentation about human rights in their educational institutions.

## 6. Discussion

The aim of the study was to assess the extent of the transfer of knowledge about HRE to pre-service teachers during their B. Ed. courses. For this purpose, the integration of human rights in the curriculum of Pakistani pre-service teachers and their knowledge, attitudes and practices were analyzed. The results showed that there is no specific module on HRE that is either recommended by the HEC or has been introduced by the universities (1, 2 & 3).

Anees (2014) promulgated that HRE is helping teachers with their essential task of staying aware of the worldwide pace of social change, while explaining the relevance of human rights to their everyday work. Additionally, the principles of worldwide citizenship, co-existence, and transformative activity guarantee the adaptability and versatility of human rights to local cultural needs.

This shows that even though Pakistan is obligated to spread HRE due to being a signatory of international declarations, the education system either has been deliberately neglected or never was considered a priority. On the other hand, HRE has turned into an increasingly normal feature of international policy discussions, national textbook reform, and post-conflict educational methodologies. More prominence given to what HRE is, does, and means may expectedly wipe out concerns that it is a foreign agenda. However, comprehensive and effective national strategies for the spread of HRE are likely to follow only from more detailed guidance and support for states at the international level (Struthers, 2015).

Researchers advocate that educational projects that resist larger social, political and economic inequalities offer understanding about how we learn, teach, and act for peace in diverse settings (Anees, 2014; Bajaj, 2012; Malik & Courtney, 2011). It is also important to know what is impeding the spread of peace education in the universities of Pakistan. Why the academia is failing to engage in a fruitful educational praxis leading to creative additions to the universal purpose of peace education.

Additionally, the results from the survey showed that a vast majority of prospective teachers was unaware of any document related to human rights. Similarly, a vast majority also agreed that nothing was taught to them regarding human rights, either in the form of lecture, seminar, presentation or activity. Moreover, a huge number of respondents agreed about the need for HRE in educational institutions. The survey showed that pre-service teachers had a positive attitude towards HRE but there is a prevailing need to provide knowledge and awareness of HRE as well as for 'Education for All'.

This study pointed out a huge gap in our current teacher training curriculum. HRE is not integrated anywhere in the courses taught in BEd, which serves as a pre-requisite for elementary and secondary teachers. The 14 articles of Human Rights Declaration addressing the role of the state to ensure that HRE is provided to all, especially teachers, as specified in article 7 (UNO [2012](#)) is not implemented. While this study did not intend to discover the specific knowledge of prospective teachers about various types of human rights as addressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it did try to find out the extent to which the prospective teachers were aware of the instruments of human rights.

HRE needs to be addressed seriously in our educational policies and action plans, which are reflected in the curriculum for teacher education. There is a need to integrate HRE in the guidelines provided by the HEC for BEd program. With 3751 teacher training institutes in Pakistan including 292 private institutions and 3,459 public institutions (NEMIS-AEPAM [2017](#)), thousands of teachers may be trained in HRE via its incorporation in national curriculum. A separate module (3 credit hour course) should be introduced for teachers to become well versed in human rights.

This course should not only introduce teachers to the instruments of human rights but should also guide them how to teach children about their rights and responsibilities in a child-friendly, age-appropriate way for them to become democratic, responsible citizens of the society. Components of human rights can also be incorporated in the existing modules of BEd (for example in child development, classroom management, contemporary issues in education, and school, community and teacher, and Islamic studies /ethics). For universities to promote HRE, it may also be offered as an elective course. It may be included as a 1/2 credit hour (compulsory) course for all students in the university (including students in education).

## 7. Conclusion

The current study established that the teacher education program is restricted in scope, traditionalist/conventional in nature and more or less insignificant to the needs of modern Pakistan. The current constitution of BEd programs is inadequate to fulfill the need of teaching human rights to prospective teachers.

For our teachers to respect, fulfill and promote human rights at all levels, it is important to train them in its basic principles. To bridge the gaps of gender, class and ability in the society, it is important that these teachers are given information about human rights and HRE, which could be transferred to students and their communities. It is important for them to understand the value of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and be a part of the state machinery to ensure that HRE and awareness is transferred to the masses. Starting from the student and extending to his/her community and the society at large, HRE can serve as a foundation for understanding and respecting human beings and bringing peace.

## 8. Implications

Teacher education curriculum must provide practical suggestions for ways in which teachers can increase young people's awareness of the importance of securing their rights and those of others in the community. Looking particularly at how teachers may challenge injustice, racism and xenophobia, they may examine human rights as the basis for educational policies and discuss how international human rights instruments can be incorporated into the teacher education curriculum. Moreover, teaching of human rights cannot be restricted to one discipline; rather, it should be a trans-disciplinary effort in order to integrate human rights and further develop this concept to support rich and meaningful learning settings for students.

When talking about human rights it is not enough to know the rights simply; much more important is the definition of rights and the identification of the person or entity whose responsibility is to grant these rights (Weiss, 2003). Khoja (2014) suggested that rights ought to be discussed with the stakeholders within communities before they are made part of any curriculum. She argued that individuals are not simply objects of knowledge; rather, they co-opt, resist, negotiate, and compromise. Hence, they must realize that it is something which ought to be awakened

within rather than imposed from the outside. Hence, the scope of HRE remains fluid and alive producing real-time ‘neoliberal rationalities’. Teaching is a job mostly opted by women, thus it is not only emancipatory in its nature (Arif, [2018](#); Arif & Iqbal, [2019](#)) but participation in higher education programs like B.Ed enables women to resist a number of discriminatory practices going on in the society together with a growing sense of self-empowerment, economic independence and gender equality (Malik & Courtney, [2011](#); Sen & Mukherjee, [2014](#)). Such goals are not to be ignored when planning for HRE.

Osler et al. ([2015](#)) recommended that in this globalized world, educational researchers and practitioners need tools that can be applied in a range of contexts and scales including local, national, and international. The conception of human rights is not fixed and the ideas related to human rights and democracy must be revisited to make them more meaningful for the public at large. Wherever adapted, the theory of HRE should focus on a two-point agenda – universality and recognition – addressing the needs of multicultural, multi-faith, yet secular societies that are characterized by asymmetrical power relations and anti-democratic political movements.

Zembylas ([2017a](#)) pointed out that so far the issue of HRE has been examined through a critical lens that inculcates the Eurocentric grounding of human rights, which arises skepticism in many other nations. Therefore, the re-contextualization of human rights in the universal perspective of social justice and peace education is needed. Indeed pedagogy and curriculum are to be decolonized and multi-perspectival and universal understanding of human rights is to be inculcated across societies in the modern world. This effort marks the struggle for cognitive justice and the recognition of epistemic diversity as well (Santos, [2005](#); Zembylas, [2017b](#)). Justice et al. ([2007](#)) advocated to design an inquiry based course for HRE as inquiry is a potent pedagogical tool in higher education, encouraging students to become self-directed and engaged learners.

## 9. Limitations

This study reviewed teacher training at bachelor level in Punjab. This study did not concern itself with teacher training institutes outside Lahore. The sample for the questionnaire was not representative of the entire population as convenient sampling was employed and the sample was taken only from one Public Sector University. The instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire and it was not tested for validity. The awareness about HRE

in teachers needs to be further researched especially with reference to other educational programs, such as Masters in Education (MEd) and in-service courses and in other populations across the country for a better understanding.

However, this study provided a glimpse of the fact that teacher education programs are not preparing pre-service teachers well enough to understand the concept of basic human rights. Hence, human rights practices and implementation is a serious concern in teacher training institutes as well as the school.

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